

## Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL ASWAN IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 052765

TOSEC 190

FOLLOWING REPEAT PARIS 5966 ACTION SECSTATE INFO PHNOM PENH  
7 MARCH.

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L

PARIS 05966

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4

TAGS: PFOR PINT CB

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH GENERAL NHIEK TIOULONG

CONCERNING CAMBODIA

REF: PARIS 05699

1. SUMMARY: KHMER FORMER MINISTER NHIEK TIOULONG  
TOLD EMBOFF MARCH 7 THAT HIS PROPOSAL FOR SIHANOUK TO  
RETURN TO PHNOM PENH WAS DESIGNED TO PERMIT THE  
NATIONALISTS MORE EFFECTIVELY TO OPPOSE THE PRO-  
VIETNAMESE IN THE CAMBODIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (CCP). HE  
THOUGHT THAT THIS PROPOSAL WAS PERHAPS ALREADY TOO LATE,  
AND ONE SHOULD NOW CONSIDER DEALING WITH THE NATIONALIS-  
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TS WITHIN THE CCP SUCH AS KHIEU SAMPHAN. TIOULONG HAD

LEARNED FROM SIHANOUK OF A FRANCO-ROMANIAN PROPOSAL FOR A "MAKARIOS-TYPE" SOLUVON FOR CAMBODIA, BUT HAD NOT GIVEN HIS REPLY YET. TIOULONG HAD ALSO LEARNED THAT SIHANOUK HAD THREATENED TO RESIGN IF THE COMMUNISTS DID NOT PERMIT HIM TO FIND A POLITICAL SOLUTION IF THEIR MILITARY OFFENSIVE DID NOT SUCCEED BY THE END OF THE DRY SEASON. COMMENT: TIOULONG DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE ACTING ON ANY SPECIFIC PROPOSALS FROM SIHANOUK.

2. NHIEK TIOULONG REQUESTED EMBOFF TO MEET HIM TO DISCUSS HIS ARTICLE IN INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE (REFTEL) AND OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SITUATION IN CAMBODIA. HE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY HIS SON-IN-LAW, SAM RANGSI. TIOULONG DID NOT PRESENT ANY WRITTEN PROGRAM AS RANGSI HAD PREVIOUSLY INDICATED HE MIGHT DO. TIOULONG EMPHASIZED THAT HIS PROPOSAL WAS DESIGNED TO PROVIDE SOME WAY TO MAXIMIZE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF NATIONALIST FORCES AND TO REDUCE THE ROLE WHICH THE COMMUNISTS WOULD PLAY IN A "POST WAR" CAMBODIA. HE HAD FAIRLY RECENTLY RECEIVED MESSAGES FROM SIHANOUK AND EXPECTED TO OBTAIN FURTHER, MORE DIRECT, COMMENTS WHEN KHEK VANDY RETURNED FROM PEKING MARCH 9. HE THOUGHT IT CLEAR THAT SIHANOUK WISHED TO PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN CAMBODIA AND HIS CONSTANT STATEMENTS THAT HE WOULD NOT DO SO, BUT WOULD SERVE MERELY AS ROVING AMBASSADOR, SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN TOO SERIOUSLY. TIOULONG ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT THESE STATEMENTS MIGHT INDICATE SIHANOUK'S APPRAISAL OF THE LIMITED ROLE THE COMMUNISTS WOULD PERMIT HIM. TIOULONG THOUGHT IT USEFUL TO ATTEMPT TO ENCOURAGE SIHANOUK TO BE PREPARED FOR A MORE INFLUENTIAL ROLE AS THE SOLE FIGURE CAPABLE OF COALESCING DISPARATE NATIONALIST FORCES. THIS WAS THE REASON FOR HIS BREAKING SILENCE TO COME OUT IN SUPPORT OF SIHANOUK.

3. TIOULONG CONSIDERED THE PRINCIPAL OPPONENT OF NATIONALIST CAMBODIA TO BE NORTH VIET-NAM, AND THE CAMBODIAN COMMUNIST MOVEMENT WAS PRINCIPALLY A DANGER INsofar AS IT SERVED THE VIETNAMESE INTERESTS. TIOULONG THOUGHT THAT SOME NATIONALIST FIGURES IN THE KHMER

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COMMUNIST MOVEMENT, SUCH AS KHIEU SAMPHAN, MIGHT RECOGNIZE THE DESIRABILITY OF COOPERATING WITH OTHER NATIONAL FORCES IN ORDER TO KEEP IN LINE THE VIETNAMESE WING OF THE KHMER COMMUNIST PARTY. TIOULONG PERSONALLY THOUGHT THE CURRENT PROMINANT POSITION OF KHIEU SAMPHAN WAS THE RESULT OF A PURELY TACTICAL DECISION ON THE PART OF PRO-VIETNAMESE ELEMENTS WITHIN THE COMMUNIST PARTY -- AND THE LDP. FOLLOWING A VICTORY, THE

NATIONALIST FACTION RISKED BEING MADE IMPOTENT OR ELIMINATED.

4. TIOULONG THOUGHT THAT EVENTS HAVE MOVED SO RAPIDLY THAT PERHAPS HIS OWN PROPOSAL FOR THE RETURN OF SIHANOUK WAS ALREADY TOO LATE. SIHANOUK WOULD BE RELUCTANT TO UNDERTAKE SUCH AN EFFORT AND THE CHINESE WOULD BE HESITANT TO IMPOSE SUCH A SOLUTION ON THE NORTH VIETNAMESE AND THEIR FACTION WITHIN THE KHMER COMMUNIST PARTY. HE THEREFORE THOUGHT THAT SIHANOUK AND THE U.S. SHOULD BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR OCCASIONS TO DEAL WITH KHIEU SAMPHAN IN CASE FRICTION BETWEEN HIM AND THE PRO-VIETNAMESE WING OF THE KHMER COMMUNIST PARTY PERMITTED EXPLOITATION OF A DIVISION WITHIN THE FUNK.

5. TIOULONG SAID HE HAD LEARNED RECENTLY FROM SIHANOUK THAT THE FRENCH AND ROMANIANS HAD CONVEYED TO HIM A PROPOSAL FOR A "MAKARIOS TYPE" SOLUTION FOR CAMBODIA; HE STILL HAD THE PROPOSAL UNDER STUDY. SIHANOUK HAD ALSO APPARENTLY INFORMED IENG SARY AND THROUGH HIM THE COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP, THAT HE WOULD PERMIT THEM TO CONTINUE THE EFFORTS FOR A MILITARY VICTORY THROUGH THE CURRENT DRY SEASON. IF THEY DID NOT OBTAIN VICTORY DURING THIS DRY SEASON, SIHANOUK SAID HE WOULD THEN CONSIDER THAT HE HAD TO IMPLEMENT HIS OWN POLICY OF SEEKING A POLITICAL SOLUTION. IF THE COMMUNISTS OPPOSED THIS APPROACH, SIHANOUK WOULD RESIGN HIS POSITION AND WASH HIS HANDS OF THEIR EFFORTS TO OBTAIN POWER THROUGH CONTINUED KILLING. TIOULONG HAD GATHERED THAT THE COMMUNISTS HAD NOT AS YET ACCEPTED SIHANOUK'S PROPOSAL BUT THAT THEY WERE CONCERNED ABOUT HIS THREAT TO RESIGN.

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6. TIOULONG SAID HE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT GKR PERSECUTION OF ONE OF HIS DAUGHTERS (NOW IN PHNOM PENH) AS A RESULT OF HIS ARTICLE SUPPORTING SIHANOUK. HE ASKED WHETHER THE U.S. COULD ASSURE THAT SHE WOULD BE ABLE TO LEAVE PHNOM PENH AND REJOIN THE REST OF THE FAMILY HERE. EMBOFF NOTED THAT THIS WOULD BE A MATTER FOR THE GKR BUT OUR MISSION WOULD BE INFORMED OF HIS CONCERN.

7. COMMENT: TIOULONG OBVIOUSLY CONTINUES TO FOLLOW KHMER EVENTS INCLUDING THE ACTIVITIES OF SIHANOUK AND HIS ENTOURAGE. IT DOES NOT SEEM, HOWEVER, THAT HE HAS ANY SPECIAL ACCESS TO THIS GROUP, MUCH LESS TO THE COMMUNISTS. ALTHOUGH HIS LONG FRIENDSHIP WITH SIHANOUK MAY PERMIT HIM TO READ MORE OUT OF SIHANOUK'S PUBLIC

STATEMENTS AND GUARDED COMMENTS, WRITTEN AND SPOKEN, TO  
INTIMATES (INCLUDING HIMSELF), TIOULONG BY HIS OWN  
ADMISSION CANNOT REALLY SPEAK ON BEHALF OF SIHANOUK.  
RUSH UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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